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# THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORIC RESEARCH

FOR THE

THEOLOGICAL STUDENT OF TO-DAY;

## An Address

BY

Rev. HUGH MACDONALD SCOTT, B. D.,

AT HIS INAUGURATION AS SWEETSER AND MICHIGAN PROFESSOR OF  
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

WITH

THE CHARGE,

By Rev. TRUMAN M. POST, D. D.

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PUBLISHED BY VOTE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

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## INAUGURAL SERVICES.

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The public exercises in connection with the Inauguration of Rev. Hugh Macdonald Scott, B. A., B. D., as Sweetser and Michigan Professor of Ecclesiastical History, took place on Tuesday Evening, April 25th, 1882, in the First Congregational Church, Chicago, Ill.; E. W. Blatchford, Esq., President of the Board of Directors, presiding.

The Services were as follows :

Invocation by Rev. F. Bascom, D. D., Hinsdale, Ill.

Reading of the Scriptures by Rev. N. A. Hyde, D. D., Indianapolis, Ind.

Declaration of Faith, by the Professor Elect.

Charge, by Rev. T. M. Post, D. D., St. Louis, Mo.

Inaugural Prayer, by Rev. G. F. Magoun, D. D., Grinnell, Iowa.

Inaugural Address, by Prof. Scott.

Benediction, by Rev. Edward M. Williams, Minneapolis, Minn.

The Charge and Address are published by vote of the Board of Directors.



## THE CHARGE.

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*My Dear Brother :*

As this evening you are to be inaugurated in the chair of Ecclesiastical History in Chicago Theological Seminary, I have been deputed, in behalf of the Directors of the Seminary, to address to you, in connection with our cordial gratulation and welcome, the charge customary on such occasions, relative to the duties and functions of that department of instruction committed to you; more, perhaps, from a regard to the moral proprieties of the occasion and a fitting recognition of its solemn importance, than from a feeling of the need of such suggestion or reminder to you from myself. And yet my utterances will be no mere matter of form. Indeed I could not well overstate my sense of the solemnity of the transaction in which we are engaged—a transaction which commits it over to you, in the instruction of this Institution, to set forth and interpret the story of the Church of Christ—to present in truthful historic picture its spirit, methods, aims and achievements, its errors and dangers, its disasters and its victories. I know of no department that applies itself more widely and variously to all the elements of christian character and action. So vast and varied are its themes and interests, so wide its range of aspects and situations, so

manifold its suggestions and instructions and its appeals to our judgments and our sympathies, that it seems to address itself to every side of our nature; and that no department of instruction can more powerfully affect the entire cast and complexion of christian manhood or do more to determine the theory and practice of the christian life of the individual or of the Church, and the question of our proper sympathy with God's idea and purpose in his kingdom on earth. And when I reflect how much it will lie with you, by your own mental attitude and sympathy, and by the adjustment of light and shadow, standpoints and aspects, setting and environment, to affect the entire impression and lesson of the picture, there seems to me committed to your hands, in dealing with the minds of the students in interests of mightiest moment, a plastic, almost a creative power that oppresses me with a sense of the vastness of responsibility that rests on you. When, moreover, I reflect that these minds are to be among the master-builders of the House of God—the founders and primordial architects of christian churches in this new and rising world of the Northwest—when I reflect on all these things, I feel that nothing can transcend the solemnity of your position or its responsibilities, or the urgency of supplication which it requires in the outset and will require constantly in all the future, should ascend for the baptism of that Spirit which gives light and serenity and energy to the human mind, and for the overshadowing presence of that Christ whose living consciousness pervades and whose heart-beat pulsates through the entire life of the Church from its genesis in time till it emerges in the upper glory.

And here it befits first of all that we note that the Spirit we thus invoke is the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, and that your first concern and quest in your office is truth; that you anchor it in the very depth of the soul that God is served or honored of no lie; that good is sheltered or fostered of no falsehood; that iron mixed with the clay is sure to collapse, no matter how grand the structure involving the truth with the falsehood in the peril of a common ruin; that your function is not to foist your own thought as the divine organic idea into history and build upon it, but that you educe God's idea and plan from his Word and his Providence; that God wishes no colored vision, but the white light of the very truth; that it is not yours to be the advocate, champion or partisan, or to make a case, or to "trammel up the consequences." Some men fear truth as dynamite, and handle it as gingerly, lest it tear everything to pieces. God requires no Uzza to lay profane hand on the ark lest it be jostled and wrecked. Your concern is truth; God will care for the consequences. It is yours to see, listen and report. You need first of all a candor pure as the sun—a mind entirely achromatic.

By an achromatic mind I mean no utter blank, no *tabula rasa*. That were an impossibility, and would prove, if possible, an incompetency for your office.

The very condition of your appointment, the statement of the creed, assumes certain things as posited. Yet the creed is presented chiefly as a criterion of your competency to your office and fitness to work in harmony with the aims of this seminary; not surely as a project and programme of what you are subsequently to find and prove in history. When you open

that volume you are to dismiss all inquiry but, What is truth?

But though the mind is to be achromatic, it is not to be icy. It is to be like sunlight, warm and genial, as well as colorless. You must have an intense and living sympathy with the history you pursue in order truly to know it. You must *feel* into its very reality in order truly to apprehend and utter it. You want in history not a skeleton of dry bones, wired together by dates and dogmas, but the very resurrection of the dead with all their living personality and human heart-beat. You want more than the bare, isolated facts; you want facts with their environment; you want a living sympathy with the conditions and circumstances in order to the *proper setting* of truths. Truths apart from their settings are but half-truths, often the worst of lies—such as set men and peoples crazy.

Again, you are to study Church history as a *life*; as *one* life, under the inbreath of one Spirit and the presence of one Christ. You are to study it as a *human* life, not of the angelic orders; as a *family* life, not of aliens or masters, but of fathers and brothers, of men like yourself, compassed with infirmities, trials and sufferings.

You are to study it as a *perpetual* life, without break or syncope, often hid it may be, yet always existent; not traceable always through hierarchies or dynasties, through prelates or princes, through temporal or spiritual Cæsars. Often that life shrinks from the conspicuous fields of history, from the heights to the lowly vales and hidden glens, from the cathedral to the cottage, from the courts and capitals, the Canterburys and Romes of history to the hovel, the cata-



comb, the wilderness, the dens and caves of the earth. Yet you must have faith in its perpetual existence before God and in human souls, and as revealed to many exiled Elijahs in the procession and proclamation of God through the lonely waste.

You must study history as having under God *one life-trend*. You may not always clearly trace it—may not thread its seeming labyrinths or unravel its tangled maze. Often its movement may seem devious—often retrograde, and giving of itself no explanation; tedious, weary, objectless as the Exode. And yet it may be the briefest course to the desired goal—the briefest in accordance with the eternal laws of the divine economy, and of the human mind. The pilgrims have to be fitted to the promised inheritance, and the sweep of the movement must be broadened to carry with it the world. The deviation and retrogression are by the force of the same laws that bear it on to ultimate, complete success. They broaden its current, deepen its channels, accumulate its flood and its force to break through new obstacles and rush into new rapids; even as the Mississippi, while seemingly mazed in endless zigzag around cliffs and headlands and through morass and wilderness is meanwhile waiting and deflecting to receive the affluents of half a continent, and is all the time, every drop of it, under the grasp of one great law bearing it swift and straight as the face of the world will permit to the great gulf.

Again, you must study the life of the Christian Church as a *germinal, progressive, adolescent* life—one after Christ's own similitude of a vegetable growth; a development from embryonic germs, unfolding and uplifting ever to new altitude, strength, beauty and

fruitage—one destined to exhibit, with perpetual identity of germs, changes of outward form and aspect—as of blade, stalk, leaf, flower, “the ear and the full corn in the ear.” Nor are we to be surprised or dismayed if amid its changes it exhibits at times *exfoliations* analogous to those of the shrub or tree, the casting off of foliage which, having served its time in ministering to life and growth, but having become incompetent longer to do so, will, if retained, only obstruct, bind up and smother its life, and breed in it mould and decay. Kindly autumn comes and strips off the dead leafage and leaves the tree bare, seemingly blasted and dead. But it is not death, only the preparation for a new, stronger, loftier, more majestic and fruitful life. So it is at times with the germinant life and growth of the kingdom of God; periods of exfoliation come, periods of change, which are like the turning over of a new page; not that the former page has been useless, but it has been read, has given its story and lessons, and fulfilled its office, and being unturned, it would cover the one next in the continuous volume.

Such a germinal growth is presented in repeated symbols, by Christ himself, as representative of the life of his Church on earth. His instructions in them forbid the idea of some perfect paradigm, some type of completed life and growth in some past era or epoch—some authoritative model, cast in eternal stereotype, toward which all subsequent times, conditions and peoples must ever work. Under the perpetual presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, history shows us such a germinal development,—a development which did not stop with the Apostles or the Fathers,



nor yet with the Reformers or the Pilgrims ; a development not limited or bound up by Origen or Athanasius or Augustine, or by Wyckliffe, or Luther, or Calvin, or Edwards, or Wesley ; which has not presented its final outcome in the platforms of Nice, or Augsburg, or Geneva, or of Wesminster, or Savoy, or Saybrook, or Cambridge, or of Boston. These are landmarks of movement, not ultimate barriers or consummations. They are not final utterances of Christian thought, nor have we reason to believe such utterance will be delivered until the second coming of the Lord. Now, this does not imply that the Church has learned nothing, gained nothing, settled nothing, in the past centuries. The child has learned something, gained something, settled something, yet he continues to grow and to learn ; and this because he has gained, learned and settled something. But the past has changed by incorporation into a larger future.

Changes, in order to be genuine progress, must be developments of germs which are primordial and immortal. Forms and formulations, the offspring of certain conditions of mind and of the world, are liable to change with those conditions. If they are dead—have no longer congruity with the mind and life of the world—they must be cast off, or they work obstruction, disease, and gangrene. Aspects and phases of thought or speech, which have served their end to special times and cultures which are past, must give place to others, or disaster will ensue.

Who that has walked amid the terrible frescoes of the Santo Campo in Pisa, or those of the Last Judgment in the Sistine chapel in the Vatican, or whose imagination has been led by Dante through the hor-

rors of the circles of eternal sin and sorrow, and seen in those depicted certain forms of thought attaching to the orthodoxy of the middle ages, has not felt that there were presented certain ideas of God and Christ, which, of whatever service they may have been in the rude and gloomy ages preceding, the Church must in time cast off or die; or, at least, cumbered with them, could not move on to the future conquest of the world.

But, on the other hand, while we recognize as true this germinal theory of church life, we are still to bear in mind, that history, together with reason and Scripture, admonishes us there are limits to changes which we may not pass; there are changes which are not germination, but extirpation,—where a break, even from the closures of the old prison-house, in a given direction, were only a burst into chaos and old night. There are transitions with no progress; exfoliations, not unto life; new growths, which are not at all developments or outgrowths of the primal immortal germ, but only the alien parasitic misletoe feeding on the decay of the old stock; or the poison oak or ivy clinging to the noble monarch of the forest—climbing, and killing as it climbs, till at last it flaunts its deadly brilliancy high above the stately trunk now dead and decaying, and soon to fall.

The signs of the times emphasize to us the admonition of the Apostle John to the churches of his age, “Brethren, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” See whether they show us a development of the primal principles of Christian doctrine and life.

The past history of the Church, and the aspects of the times, admonish us of a *media via* a middle path,

as the one of life, midway between a dead conservatism and a wild pseudo-reform. To find it now and hold it,—here is the patience and faith of the saints, here the crisis and agonism of the hour to the Church. Woe! worth the day! if she find it not,—the middle path the pilgrim found, uplifting in the valley of the shadow of death, between the foul morass and mocking ghouls on the one hand, and on the other the dark deeps eddying with eternal flames or screaming with everlasting rage and woe. Woe to those who call ruin reform, or reform ruin; woe to the iconoclast, that mutilates and desecrates the tombs and altars of his fathers, or who converts their images to a Chinese lararium; woe to him who will not look on the brazen serpent, or who perverts it to a fetish; woe to him who cuts himself off from the body of life, and to him who binds himself to a body of death; woe to those who worship the mummies of hoary Eld, or who—like the renegades and apostates seen by Ezekiel through the hole in the wall, amid chambers of foul and abominable imagery, and at last standing between the porch and the altar—in their eagerness to worship the rising sun, impiously turn their backs on the temple of Jehovah; woe to the wretch that scuttles the ship that carries him, or the dotard who ties himself to the anchor against the terrors of shipwreck; woe to him who despises and dishonors the infant Church under the presence or near memories of Christ and the apostles, and to him as well who would crowd eighteen centuries and a half of history, experience and progress back into the cradle.

History is no pandect of ecclesiastical law; narrative is not legislation; action is not command, even in case

of inspired men, unless associated with express enactment or exact parallel analogy. God knows to command, if He wills, with all fullness, precision and circumstantiality of detail, in matters of form, or order, or liturgy, as in the Mosaic Institute. His omission to do so in the New Testament is significant. The organic principles and immortal germs being given, their development and application, as regards phase, form and phrase, seems largely relegated to the free reason and conscience of men, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit and the ever present Christ.

History is the thesaurus of instances, analogies, illustrations, and of the best thought and achievement of the past, though neither the thought or achievement is divine or of authoritative example. It is an exhibit of causes, consequences, tendencies and results, errors and disasters, as well as of heroic and martyr doing and suffering. It shows also the limits and conditions of the progress of the Kingdom of God, and God's plan and economy for its final triumph in the conversion of the world. It summons us to the paths indicated by Christ, and trodden by the apostles, evangelists and martyrs of earliest times, as the true way to this result. It gives the chart of earlier voyagers, and plants danger signals against rock and tempest along the deeps over which we are to sail. In all these regards history offers vast aids, if we seek from it counsel and not authority. It also admonishes us of transition periods, their perils and hopes, and the necessity of the middle path.

Within the sphere left open to human freedom we may not wonder or be startled at signs of change. What we have to see to is that the change be a devel-

opment, an unfolding and not uprooting of that planted by Christ and his apostles ; that it is merely the removal of forms of thought which man has created and man may also modify or rescind. Such changes in theologic systems often unnecessarily alarm us, as if the pillars of the eternal truth itself were shaken. Is not God, we ask, is not Christ “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever?” Yes! But man is not the same yesterday, to-day, and forever ; nor is man’s knowledge of God and his word. Truth is eternally one and the same ; but not so is man’s science of truth. The heavens are from of old unchangeably the same—over a Ptolemy, a Copernicus, a Kepler, a Newton, a La Place—but not so is Astronomy, man’s science of the starry universe, nor would their aspect be the same to a stand-point on the earth and on Sirius. “But,” it is urged, “is not Christ’s presence promised to be with his Church always, and does not this insure her unchangeableness? Yes. Christ’s promise is to us of His perpetual presence, and therein is all our hope. But that insures *progress*, not unimprovable perfectness at the beginning. Christ *has* been with the Church in all the past ages, and thereby we know what that promise means. That presence is influence—not force, not fatalism. It is not, as we clearly see in the past, a guaranty of infallibility or impeccability to any man, or order, or class, or age, or church, but a promise of readiness to aid and guide the willing and obedient, and to overrule disaster and failure, so as to secure the final victory, and to guarantee to the Church that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. We glory in that presence, and in it is our confidence of hope. We rejoice in that presence, and still



and ever with us as with our fathers, and as it will be with the Church in the coming happier ages. Christ still lives, and the Spirit of Truth, and the Eternal God, and also the human reason and conscience communing with immortal truth; therefore, the Church of Christ still lives, and with the franchise of freedom and of power on her as of old; and she stands, with no sphynx face—ever turned toward the climes of memory—but like the fourfold visaged cherubim, seen by Ezekiel at the river Chebar, full of eyes, and with universal outlook, sweeping at once the horizon of all the ages.

Let us not be dismayed at times of transition, as if we were in peril of shipwreck; Christ is on board,—“Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the seas, though the waves thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a stream whose waters shall make glad the city of our God; God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.” Christ is on board! If God be with us, who can be against us? What shall separate us from His love? Shall things present or things to come; or life, or death, or any other creature? The ship that bears the Christ! Well may the utterances of that sweet voice, that has just faded into heaven, spoken of another ship, be applied to her. Sail on, O ship, that bears the Christ,—

“Humanity, with all its fears,  
With all its hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate.

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“Fear not each sudden sound or shock,  
’Tis of the wave and not the rock,

'Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by the gale.  
In spite of rocks and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea,  
Our hopes, our hearts are all with thee;  
Our hopes, our hearts, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith, triumphant o'er our fears,—  
Are all with thee—are all with thee."

The history of Christianity in the past is of a *life*. It shall be so in the future,—a life climbing ever mightier and loftier, in a more inspiring atmosphere, and clearer light, and larger vision. It is not to die : not till the throb for immortality has ceased in the human breast, or an answer, surer and more hopeful than that of the risen Christ, shall come to the ages applying the ear to the abyss of the grave ; not till that risen Christ has ceased to be the uplift of the world, His Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, and the vision of the beauty and glory of Christ has sunk from the gaze of the world into the deeps of the eternal past, and the New Jerusalem, with its faces of the loved and beautiful and blessed, has been resigned by man to everlasting oblivion ; not till then, shall the stone rolled by the angels from the door of the sepulchre be rolled back again, and the history of the Church of Christ become epitaph—the memory of a dream the sweetest, most beneficent, most beautiful, most blessed, that ever descended on human vision, but drifting itself to the same grave to which it marshalled the deluded race of man. Till then history, standing by the open tomb of Him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, shall utter with the beloved disciple, "This is the true God and eternal life."





## INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

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MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS:

Studies are usually divided into direct and oblique, or those which are of immediate value by imparting knowledge and those which are educative, and are prized because of the mental training which they afford. The traditional system was largely of the former, the modern method is chiefly of the latter type. How merry educationists have made themselves over learning by rote, burdening the memory with a mass of ill-digested facts, and turning the mind into a vast curiosity shop, we need scarcely be told—for the laughter is still in our ears. It might be more profitable, perhaps, to venture to ask if we have not gone just a little too far in this direction; and, in our philosophic desire to cultivate the understanding, enliven the fancy and polish the language, may not have forgotten to give the mind material enough on which to think, and provide our eloquence with information enough wherewith to balance it in its flight.

We will certainly be within both the Baconian method and the practice of the most progressive studies, when we emphasize the supreme importance of a wide acquaintance with facts, and of a head full

of the results of other men's labors : for wisdom implies knowledge ; principles presuppose a familiarity with phenomena ; a weighty opinion must be based on broad and clear information, and the highest decision of the present must rest upon the deepest study of the past. The stream of investigation in our day runs more than ever before in the direction of the historic, and a wide accumulation of facts, to be carefully kept in mind, is pronounced an indispensable prerequisite to all independent effort.

The modern scientist deals as much with the science of history as with the history of science,—for we are pointed everywhere to unity, organism, development. Geology is a chronology of the earth, the dates of which are to be carefully remembered ; botany tells of the generation and migration of plants ; physiology is the successive biographies of protoplasm, fish, monkey and man ; philosophy has become a history of thought ; morals is traced as the unconscious product of long-continued habits ; and religion itself is decided to be the historic translation of subjective states into objective deities.

Although we approach the history of the church in quite another spirit than that which seems to prevail in the studies referred to, we find ourselves in hearty agreement with the demands which they make for a wide and sweeping knowledge of facts.

For, what is the foundation of Christianity? It is a fact—Christ and His work. Where are these set forth? In the Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament. What is the New Testament? It is a certain collection of books which church tradition has given us. Where did the Church get them? Why

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did she receive them? What are they to us? These questions history must answer. Its light alone can reveal the time, the circumstances, the authors, the receivers, the authority of such writings; for the *testimonium spiritus sancti* is no longer appealed to in deciding the date of the Apocalypse or the canonicity of Jude, and the argument from prophecy and miracles as proofs of revelation has fallen into neglect, because of the general character of the one and the circumstance that the others must themselves be first historically defended.

If, then, the entrance to theology and faith be through the canon of Scripture, and the doorway to the canon be through history, it will not be inappropriate, in seeking to show the importance of our department, to notice at the outset the present state of the science of New Testament Introduction, and the necessity which it creates for a very special acquaintance with the life and labors of the early church.

## I.

Tertullian tells us<sup>1</sup> that in his time the Christian was painted by heathen wit as a man with an ass's head reading a book. With a little more delicate satire the same idea is uttered in our day by the advocates of advanced Biblical criticism, in reference to what they call the wooden orthodoxy, the slavery of the letter, the blind traditionalism of unilluminated Christianity. The so-called dogmatic view of the canon of Scripture is pronounced emphatically wrong. It leads to an utter perversion of the origin of the

<sup>1</sup> *Apologeticus*, c. xvi.

church ; it brings its advocates into conflict with the science and culture of the age ; and to be persevered in, after all that modern historic research has brought to light, argues either pitiable weakness or wilful blindness.

The apostle and high priest of this critical school was Baur of Tübingen (d. 1860). He applied the Hegelian philosophy to the study of history with a marvelous acuteness of vision and almost incredible mastery of details, and out of his crucible but five of the New Testament books came forth unmixed gold, viz., *Romans, I. and II. Corinthians, Galatians, and the Apocalypse.*

Hilgenfeld, a disciple of this school, claims to follow the literary-historic rather than Baur's tendency theory, and adds *I. Thessalonians, Philemon, and Philippians* to the genuine books. His historic principle—that of the so-called “scientific theology”—in studying the New Testament canon, is that “the Apostolic period was moved by a contrast—not original, but appearing gradually, and therefore capable of being harmonized; a contrast which the several books of the New Testament represent in its whole course.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon the foundation of this Petro-Pauline schism two further appearances especially enable these critics to pronounce upon the origin of the New Testament Scriptures. These are the Roman persecutions and the inner crisis caused by Gnosticism. In the light of these historic torches we are told that the first Epistle of Peter was written under Trajan,—about A. D. 113,—not only because it echoes the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle of James, and that to the Heb-

<sup>1</sup> *Einleitung in d. N. Test.*, 1875. Vorwort, S. V.

rews, but because its notice of busybodies (1 Peter iv:15) indicates the *Delatores*, who became active again in the reign of Domitian and during the persecution under Trajan.<sup>1</sup>

*II. Thessalonians* belongs to this period, because the "man of sin" is Nero, and the circumstances attending him point to the preaching of the Jewish Christian Elxai, who lived under Trajan.<sup>2</sup> Hausrath<sup>3</sup> finds in ὁ κατέχων (2, 7) a punning reference to Claudius!

Holtzmann, in an elaborate work,<sup>4</sup> proves to a certainty, in the eyes of the new school, that the pastoral epistles are a product of the first half of the second century, and are only possible historically when viewed as an effort to promote union in the church in the face of distraction, caused by persecution without and heresy within.

Every historic indication, we are informed, is against them. No place can be found for them in the life of Paul; they are full of words and phrases drawn from the philosophy of the second century; the gnostic heresy attacked is unknown to the apostles; they show a developed church hierarchy not reached till a late period; and the subjective nature of their teaching betrays in its mediating tendency the irenical efforts of the post-apostolic age. Historic criticism, therefore, declares they are a continuation of the writings of the Pauline tendency, and form a bridge between Paulinism and the Logos-Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

The Epistles to the *Colossians* and *Ephesians* belong to the same late period, as is seen in their speculative

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pliny's letter to Trajan.

<sup>2</sup> Hilgenfeld—*Elg.* p. 648.

<sup>3</sup> *Neutestamentl. Zeitgeschichte*—Bd. I., p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> *Die pastoralbriefe, Kritisch u. exegetisch behandelt, Leipzig*, 1880.

<sup>5</sup> Holtzmann—*Einleitung*.



coloring, and are very likely the product of historic transition from Christian essenism to gnosticism. This is the view of Lipsius.<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle of James, Hilgenfeld sets in the year A. D. 90, because it borrows such phrases as *τροχὸς τῆς γενέσεως* from Orphic hymns—a realm of gnosticism of which James could know nothing.

II. Peter is given up, we are told, by all historic critics, orthodox and liberal, except Weiss and Thiersch.

If internal evidence, combined with a perfect consensus of historic indications, is worth anything, the Acts of the Apostles and the fourth Gospel cannot be the work of Luke and John. On this point the new school is unanimous, and regards the question as settled.<sup>2</sup> The only apostolic portion of the Gospels is the substratum in Matthew and Mark, before it was worked over into its present form.

There are thus, we are told, two periods in New Testament literature. The first, the Apostolic, including the genuine epistles of Paul, the Apocalypse, and the two oldest synoptic gospels; the second, the post-Apostolic, embracing the remaining writings, which betray in nearly every instance the pre-existence of the others.<sup>3</sup> This deutero-canon, the loftiest part of the New Testament, is the result of Christian Platonism in Alexandria building, in the second century, a system upon the foundation laid by Paul.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, at the close of more than thirty years historical research, by a school of critics that has no superior in solid learning, patient investigation

<sup>1</sup> *Gnosticismus*, S. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Holtzman, "*Recht u. Pflicht der Biblischen Kritik*, 1874, S. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Hausrath, *N. T. Ztsch.*, Bd. III., s. 560.

and subtle conjecture, we are told that nearly two thirds of our New Testament canon belongs to the post-Apostolic period, and was quietly put into circulation under the honored names of Peter, John and Paul. Of these later works Hausrath says,<sup>1</sup> "the church herself received of the products of this literary movement what satisfied her religious need, . . . . but this choice was more a matter of religious tact than a work of historic criticism." Such words as fraud and forgery and deception, we are told, at once betray a total ignorance of the historic circumstances amid which the New Testament writings arose. The church's views of literary propriety, the rights of authors, and the measure of importance to be assigned to the supposed writer were, we are assured, simply those of the first centuries; and how different these were from those in our day no careful historian needs to be informed.

It was a well known and common practice among classic writers,<sup>2</sup> both Greek and Latin, to publish their own views under the name of some great author of the past. Every schoolboy remembers, and is not deceived by it, how Livy and Tacitus put speeches into the mouth of their historic characters. Plato, amid minute details of time and place, makes Socrates teach the ideal philosophy, and every student knows we have spurious dialogues under the name of Plato himself.

The Neo-Pythagoreans thought they honored their master by putting their exposition of his teachings into his own mouth. More than fifty such works

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* Bd. III., s. 559.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Zeller, *Abhandl. Gesch. Inhalts*, s. 298.

were assigned to Pythagoras, and no one raised a cry of forgery or literary dishonesty.<sup>1</sup> In our period this became a favorite style of publishing thought. Cicero says,<sup>2</sup> "this method of composition, which bases itself upon illustrious men of the past, seems, I do not know how, to have great weight."

We are called, further, to observe that Jewish literature followed this early custom. The translators of the LXX. not only did not hesitate to insert explanatory remarks into their text, but added whole books. Susannah and Bel and Dragon were inserted as part of Daniel. The Wisdom of Solomon was published by a Greek Jew as if a genuine work of that king. Ecclesiastes, though claiming to be written by the "son of David," even orthodox divines now admit not to be from Solomon. The book of Enoch—itsself apocryphal—received all kinds of apocryphal additions from later hands. Dillmann, speaking of Jewish literature in the century before Christ, says,<sup>3</sup> "At that time it had become a familiar custom, based on the example of certain Old Testament writings, for an author to express himself under the name of another, putting traditional teaching into the mouth of some ancient man of God who lived when the spirit of prophecy still spake with men." In the Diaspora the Jews carried this tendency so far as to insert lines in Homer teaching the Sabbath, and made Orpheus speak of the Decalogue.<sup>4</sup>

It would be, then, we are assured, a marvellous thing if early Christian writers regarded as a sin what both Jews and Greeks considered simply a literary

<sup>1</sup> Holtzmann, *R. u. Pf.*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *De Amic.*, I. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Das Buch Henoch übersetzt u. erklärt.*—*Elg.* s. xxvi, 1853.

<sup>4</sup> Hilgenfeld, p. 167.



method. It is pointed out that what constitutes right and wrong in actions varies in different ages. Hieronymus, the greatest scholar of his time, speaking of the Epistle of James, says,<sup>1</sup> "It is said to have been published under the name of James, and may as time went on have little by little obtained authority." The primitive church was not horrified at the thought of interpolated or substituted writings. The important matter was the teaching that was offered and not the author of it. In proof of this we are bidden consider the mass of apocryphal literature which arose in the first two centuries.

And first of all the New Testament itself refers to such works. The Epistle of Jude quotes (v. 14-15) the "Book of Enoch," an apocryphal writing of the first century B. C.; and II. Timothy (iii. 8) gives information from the *Assumptio Mosis*, written about the time of the birth of Christ. The Gospel to the Hebrews, once canonical for a part of the church, is now lost.

Various books, now rejected, were regarded as authoritative by some early churches and Fathers. Irenaeus received the Shepherd of Hermas as *Scriptura*.<sup>2</sup> Tertullian considered<sup>3</sup> the Book of Enoch genuine, and thought Noah might have preserved it orally, or have been inspired to restore it. The Apocalypse of Peter was received by the Muratorian Fragmentist, who also speaks of an Epistle to the Laodiceans and another to Alexandria as wrongly assigned to Paul. Clement of Alexandria ascribes the "Dialogue of Jason and Papiskos" (by Aristo of

<sup>1</sup> *Catal. Scrip. Eccl.*, c. 2.

<sup>2</sup> IV. 3, Cf. also Tertull. *De orat.*, c. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> *De Idololatria*, c. iv; *De Cult. Fem.* i. 3.

Pella) to Luke.<sup>1</sup> The Epistle of Clement of Rome was read in churches, and is numbered in the canon in Codex A. In a Syrian MS. (Paris, 1876, discovered) it forms part of the New Testament, standing after the Pastoral Epistles. The Epistle of Barnabas was Scripture for Origen. The Ebionites received the Clementine writings, and referred to the so-called "Witness of Timothy" as the words of Jesus. Clement of Alexandria did not receive Jude or II. and III. John, yet he allowed them to be used in church because written in honor of the apostles. The author of the pseudo Acts of Paul and Thecla, when charged with the fiction, said<sup>2</sup> he did it to magnify Paul. The great body of New Testament apocrypha, containing among others about fifty apocryphal gospels, had a similar aim. We name only "The Testament of the XII. Patriarchs," the "*Protevangelium Jacobi*," "The Discourse of Peter," "The Acts of Pilate," "The Acts of Matthew," "The Acts of Andrew," "The Apocalypse of Paul," "The Acts of Thomas," the correspondence between Jesus and Abgar.

In the first two centuries an unprecedented number of such writings arose, and the church, having a faint conception of historic criticism, accepted simply, we are informed, those which were useful for her purpose. How ready she was to act on such a principle is seen in the use she made of supposed heathen revelation. Justin Martyr appeals to the testimony of the Sibylline books, and Clement of Alexandria cites a work of Zoroaster, in which, after his return to life, he described the region of the dead. It was but another step in this direction to produce or use supposed deci-

<sup>1</sup> *Scholia ad Dionys. Alex.*

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, c. xvii.

sions of Governors or Emperors. Such were the spurious edicts of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, fit forerunners of the donation of Constantine and the Isidoran Decretals. Viewing these things from a rationalistic point of view, Lecky exclaims, "The immense number of forged documents is one of the most disgraceful features of the Church History of the first two centuries,"<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere (p. 399) speaks of "the deliberate and apparently perfectly unscrupulous forgery of a whole literature." After more than two centuries of such use of fluctuating Scriptures, the church was led—by a growing demand for a fixed canon in public worship, and by heretical writers who published false doctrine under apostolic names—to close the collection of sacred literature. The earliest attempts were neither exact nor uniform. The Councils of Laodicea and Hippo, which first enumerated the books, give different lists—neither of which agrees with our canon. As Paine coarsely puts it,<sup>2</sup> "Those books which had a majority of votes were voted to be the word of God."

The New Testament, then, according to this new school, is "a selection of the classical writings of original Christianity, enclosed by movable boundaries, and arose throughout the century extending from about A. D. 53 onwards."<sup>3</sup> It is an organic part of the religious literature of the first two centuries, differing from other parts only in a degree of excellence, and only to be understood by a study of all the surrounding works. Now, it is plain to every thinking man, that we have here to do with a vast array of facts, or

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of European Morals*, Vol. I., p. 363—note.

<sup>2</sup> *Age of Reason*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Holtzmann, *R. u. p.*, p. 18. Hilgenfeld, *Der Kanon*, s. 67.

supposed facts, and with a view of Scripture built upon them, which, if true, must largely change our mode of teaching and obeying that which we call the word of God. The path of this enquiry is strictly historic. It runs through the Apocryphal New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, the Clementines, the works of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and the Alexandrian school,—for from all these plausible arguments are drawn in proof of the new theory of the canon. It leads into the views of Marcion, Gnosticism, Montanism, and the Passover controversy—all of which, we are told, indicate the late origin of the contested books. No century in the history of the church is so obscure as that succeeding the apostolic.<sup>1</sup> Only the acuteness of modern historic science, we are assured, has enabled us to discern the truth amid the blended shadows of ignorance and credulity. If these things are so, it is certainly a very simple and honest conclusion that the Christian student, who will pronounce for or against the results reached by such investigations, should, in common decency, make himself master of the facts adduced, and learn to weigh the evidence offered in the balance of historic enlightenment. The church cannot, and dare not, be ignorant or silent over her own past, whence weapons are being drawn that may slay her future. When scientific research and blatant unbelief unite to proclaim the Scriptures unhistoric—and that in tones so loud that they are heard to-day in remote country parishes—it will not do to cry, in startled rhetoric, “*procul profani*,” and declare, by short and easy faith, that the word of the Lord abideth forever. No amount of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stanley, *Eastern Church*, p. 39.

philosophic acumen, or keen orthodoxy, or pulpit eloquence, or appeals to experience, will answer what claims to be historic testimony. All such attempts are but fighting darkness with a broom. We must know whereof we affirm, and be able to give an answer based on facts to every man that asks a reason for the faith that is in us.

## II.

But, turning to another relation of our subject, it seems especially necessary at the present day that religious history should be carefully studied in view of the materialistic, rationalistic and speculative theories which do not hesitate in the light of the nineteenth century to claim the whole being and history of man for their respective domains. The lowest of these is the teaching of the present-day scientists—a kind of Ishmaelites—whose creed usually runs, “there is no god but matter, and Darwin is his prophet.” With marvellous skill and patience they have weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; they have calculated forces, formulated equivalents, conserved and transmuted energy, wrested secret after secret from the grasp of nature; and, under the guidance of experiment and observation, reduced the most complicated physical phenomena to the reign of law. But beyond the universe of matter seems to lie a world of mind; could not this be conquered by the same triumphant method? May not the intricate facts of consciousness—thought, emotion, purpose, worship—be reduced to law, and expressed by a mathematical formula? This the modern scientist is ready to affirm.



Roger Bacon said to his pupil "*Tu meliores radices egeris*"<sup>1</sup> (you will strike root deeper, and bear fruit higher than I). That, we are told, was a significantly prophetic remark. Man has advanced through the periods pointed out by Comte—those of fetishism, metaphysics, and monotheism—to the full liberty of the children of science. God has been eliminated from the problem, as Ruskin says, because he has not been found in a bottle anywhere. History, we are informed, shows that the advance of mankind has always been over the graves of deities. Virchow says,<sup>2</sup> "We have the office to morally free the people." Haeckel declares, "Our century forms, through the discovery of the origin of man, the most important and glorious turning-point in the whole history of the development of humanity."

And all this, we are assured, is not accidental, but is a part of nature's results under the law of history. Buckle maintains that Shakspeare was just as necessary a product of his time as a corn-cob is of the Summer sun. Herbert Spencer has written a history of Ethics to show that morals is a physical product, developed in time under the law of animal pleasure and heredity. Conscience is simply the result in us of certain nervous modifications produced from agreeable experiences of past generations inclining us to do what is pleasant.<sup>3</sup> Kant's Categorical Imperative is nothing but a shiver in the brain—the fruit of a forefather's fear, and all morals form a branch of physiological mathematics. The pleasant is always the good, the painful is always the evil. The supreme law of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Gold, Smith's "*Study of History*," p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Rede* 29, Sep. 1865.

<sup>3</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 123.

history is selfishness. Might is always right. The survivor, whether Nero or the Devil, is always the fittest, and the only gospel of the race is that of evolutionistic hedonism. The school of Necessarians make free will in history an illusion. It is at least no more mysterious a contrast to the physical law of the universe than to the sovereign will of God. Man is, in fact, an automaton. Mind is a product of the brain; emotion is a certain movement of the nerve centre; religion may be traced to the liver; and poetry is a product of the smaller intestines. The whole of man—as individual and race—is claimed as a development to be explained only by Natural Science. History is as much a physical growth as a cabbage, and when Horace compared humanity to a forest and the successive generations to the falling leaves, he was most prosaically and scientifically correct. Lofty ideas about Providence, prayer, the miraculous and the divine are mere poetic personifications born from the course of nature and the fond wishes of men.

What works through these facts and laws we do not know. We hear much of a *nisus formatives*, a *Bildungstrieb*, a something in flowers and clouds and man, which builds teleologically and well; but the radii of this mysterious quiddity never transcend the horizon of the material, and the stream of human history, with its dash of purposes and ceaseless fret and foam of volition against the iron edge of the centuries, must not be regarded as essentially different from the muddy movement of the Mississippi which bears the mire and dirt of a continent to the troubled sea. Such a view of human life, whether materialistic or pantheistic, Spinoza frankly admits

makes all idea of aim and plan and goal in history impossible, and resolves all into a blind ebb and flow movement of the life of the world.<sup>1</sup> This, then, is the final word of advanced thought, "The popular religion has entered on its last phase," and the school of modern theologians seeking to bring the creeds into harmony with science are just Plotinus and Porphyry of old fighting in the red light of a setting sun in behalf of an outlived faith.

It is beside our purpose to reply to the erroneous views adduced in illustration of the necessity of historic research, but we may notice in passing the outline of a better, because necessary, line of thought. Four points seem important to be urged in a full view of history, and receive proper attention only in a religious treatment. 1. The highest end of history is the history of humanity. This is based on the unity and brotherhood of the race—a point only clearly and emphatically taught by Christianity. 2. A world-history cannot be understood without a world government<sup>2</sup>—this, also, Christianity has taught mankind in its God over all blessed forever. 3. A history to be philosophic and complete must deal with sin and salvation, for these are phenomena called forth by all human life. Here, too, Christianity stands alone in claiming to offer perfect faith and hope. And, 4., a satisfactory view of history must leave place for freest individual effort and activity. The three great themes of every independent mind, viz., God, free will and immortality are blasted by the breath of materialism, but in the history of the Christian church find healthiest stimulus to fullest development.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Riehm. *Religion und Wissenschaft*, 1881, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> W. Von Humboldt, in Riehm, *R. u. W. S.*, 11.



Another phase of thought prevalent in our day makes the study of church history especially imperative. I refer to the great prominence given to the history and comparative treatment of different religions. The sacred books of the East have been published, missionaries from all lands furnish illustrative data, and the science of comparative religion is claiming a place in the classification of studies. The fundamental principle underlying all this department of thought is, that religion is a unity based on the nature of man and manifesting in all its historic forms the same essential features. Renan says <sup>1</sup>: "An absolute revelation of truth is contained in no human religion; the aim rather of each is according to its excellence to make man, as far as possible, happy here upon earth." Christianity accordingly is but the purest manifestation of what the Hegelian school calls the Absolute Religion, and excels the others only in leading its followers by a shorter and plainer road to that paradise where Socrates and Mahomet, the Calmet Tartar and the cannibal from the Pacific will sit down together with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In other words, we have the Neo-Platonism of the third century revived, with the slight addition that vulgar sincerity is put on a par with devout culture. The very nature of religion is apprehension of the infinite,<sup>2</sup> hence the name, the idea and worship of God are fluctuating and indifferent. Religious conceptions are the natural product of the exercise of man's senses upon the physical world about him. The loftiest idea of the infinite, virtue, law, immortality,<sup>3</sup> and the sacred words faith and revelation, are an irresistible growth of man's un-

<sup>1</sup> *London lectures, 1880. Lec. IV.*

<sup>2</sup> Max Müller, *The origin and growth of religion*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, p. 362.

aided powers of observation and generalization.

In broad contrast to all this the Christian principle proclaims itself as the Absolute, resting upon a revelation in Christ, and guided unto all truth by the Spirit of wisdom and of knowledge and of a sound mind. The church has from the beginning declined all compromise with mere natural religion. A torn and bleeding fugitive, she has refused to enter the Lararium of Alexander Severus or accept the hospitality of the mosque of Omar. The God she worships is not one spirit among many—an individual of a genus;<sup>1</sup> neither is our religion one among many, or the Christian sanctuary coördinate with Druid circle or Hindoo temple. The church is not the favorite bride in an oriental harem, she is the Lamb's wife, the sole object of his saving regard, the sole possessor of his will and covenant. Church history is, therefore, in an important sense much more than a branch of religious history. It is *the* history of religion, the only record of the foundation and growth of God's kingdom on earth. By all the holy instinct of its origin; by the uncompromising nature of truth, by the blood-stained story of martyrs and confessors is church history compelled to protest against the attempt to reduce Christianity to a mere natural creed. The modern science of religion is quite ready to yield it the first place among religions, and then proceed to show how it has attained this preëminence as the last step in development from a low state of irreligion or fetishism. But a careful study of the history of religion shows this assumption to be unproven. The Greeks described Clio—the muse of history—as the daughter of Mnem-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Delitzsch. *System der Chrł. Apologetik. Thl. I, § 1.*

osune (memory) and Zeus, the living one, (from  $\zeta\alpha\omega$ ) i. e. the story of humanity when properly told implies an union of heaven and earth—of God and man. Such a myth utters a prophetic impulse of the human heart, which finds its realization only in the history of the kingdom of God in Christ. Here alone do the seen and unseen, the finite and the infinite find a harmonious relation, for the very life of Christianity is Jesus Christ, a divine and human Saviour, and the history of the church is the fulfilment of his promise, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” One or other of these sides of the true religion has been emphasized by the great natural religions, but because both were not united as soul and body there was no life, no organic development.

Brahminism unfolded the loftiest ideas in regard to God. In his awful, impenetrable infinity, like wavelets lost in ocean, sink all finite things. The last thought of the dying Hindoo, forgetting earth and sense, is to drop into the abyss of a dreamless Nirvana with the word *Brahm* upon his stiffening lips. Max Müller has tried to show<sup>1</sup> how the ancient Hindoos speculated from nature to henotheism and polytheism, and thence to monotheism, which led through atheism and doubt to a pantheism cold, mystic and ascetic. But he does not explain why that system so poetic and philosophic has rested unprogressive and dead for two thousand years like a royal mummy in the pyramid of Cheops. Brahminism has made no advance; and it is to-day no nearer the catholic humanity and infinite pitifulness of Christianity than it was twenty centuries ago when Guatama arose to preach Buddhism to hearts that

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, p. 245f.

were hungering amid pantheistic abstractions.

The ancient faith of China, on the other hand, lays great stress upon the personal in religion. Its traditional creed is an adoration of the human. It has a belief in one God who is worshipped twice a year by the emperor for the nation; but the hearts of the people pray to their ancestors, and the thought of the infinite is almost absent from the national consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Here, also, has religion failed to maintain its balance and sunk into the ground. But not merely do these ancient systems show no power to rise into Christianity; they manifest further an inevitable process of perversion and decay. Prof. Legge says:<sup>2</sup> "The religion of the ancient Chinese was a monotheism," and it was only through long centuries that it was affected "by a nature worship on the one hand and by a system of superstitious divination on the other."<sup>3</sup> Max Müller has shown that the prevalent idea that all religion began in fetishism is utterly untenable.<sup>4</sup> In the early dawn of every nation we catch glimpses of a paradise, and hear broken voices telling of communion with God in the fellowship of truth. The history of all religions is a story of error, superstition, priestcraft and corruption. The human element in Christianity is no exception to this change and decay in religion; but, unlike other religions, it possesses a divine element as part of its very being, through which it has the power of reform, and the ability to rise from its sloth and sin, and go forth again the messenger of life to men. M. Müller finds<sup>5</sup> only three historic missionary religions, viz., Buddhism, Mo-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wordsworth. Bampton Lectures, 1881. "*The one religion.*" p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *The relig. of China*, p. 11. <sup>3</sup> p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *O. and gr. of Rel.* p. 50 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Lecture on Missions*, 1874.



hammetanism and Christianity. These alone have shown the power to overleap boundaries of race and clime, and with an enthusiastic propagandism go forth to convert the nations. The days of comparison, however, are now past and the day of contrast has come. Buddha prophesied that in five thousand years his relics would be burnt up and all knowledge of his doctrines would disappear from off the earth.<sup>1</sup> The testimony of close observers is, that his prophecy is approaching fulfilment.<sup>2</sup> Islam, which began in teaching drawn from the Bible and flourished most in contact with Christian nations<sup>3</sup> is now represented by "the sick man" among the kingdoms and the crescent is waning in the eastern sky.

No fact of modern history is more certain than that Christianity now stands alone as the one missionary religion of earth. In common with its two great rivals it has known decline and has had its dark ages, but, unlike every other faith, it has ever shown the power of self-restoration, the capacity to profit by all that science and philosophy, and other creeds, and the ever unfolding experience of man have to offer, the spiritual instinct to absorb truth from all sources and yet not lose its identity or be turned aside from its lofty mission for the Most High upon earth.

As we have observed the presence of the Divine in the church, that which separates Christianity from all creeds of earth and makes it the absolute religion, is Jesus Christ—a divine, human Saviour and life. The man who holds this in his heart is religious and Christ-

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth *B. L.*, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isaac Taylors' "*Saturday Evening*."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G. Smith. "*Lect. on Study of Hist.*, p. 121f.

ian, the man who rejects this is irreligious and not Christian.

This is a doctrine not only necessary in the logic of the Christian system, but stands through the history of the church as a *sine qua non* of activity and growth. Ebionites, Sabellians, Arians, Socinians, Unitarians, have produced men of great ability, earnestness and zeal, but they laid irreverent hands upon this essential principle and, despite all their intelligence and morality, they have never lived and taken root and leavened the earth. They form a moral society, but never make church history.<sup>1</sup> They exist as a philosophic sect—a company of sociable philanthropists—but their sustenance is parasitic, and their extinction a matter of time. On the other hand, the man or church that holds Jesus Christ as the divine human redeemer is Christian, and will live.<sup>2</sup> The Greek Church and the Church of Rome appear in the light of history growingly corrupt, in many respects far beneath the sects which they condemned for blaspheming Christ; but they held the head, even the God-man, and they have lived and will live. They possess amid much error the secret of the Lord, and from their midst there can ever arise a Chrysostom, a Wyckliffe, a Luther, to reform the church in the power of this great historic truth.

Advancing another step, we are brought to notice the importance of the study of church history in view of the claims of the so-called New Theology of our time.

Much is made here of the doctrine of development,

<sup>1</sup> I believe the Unitarians of this country have one missionary, a Mr. Dale in India.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. The development of this idea in Delitzsch, *Apologetik*.



and certainly this is an important truth for whose illustration in our day we should never cease to be thankful. The thought of God's church, i. e., its doctrine has come to consciousness in history in a certain order, and rooted in a divine revelation. In the Old Testament this can be traced in the long course of the revelation itself, the prophecies and poetic books being like an unfolding of the law. The only true theology of the Old Testament is that which moves in a great historic development. But the New Testament being given within a single generation does not show so much its development in itself, that is to be sought rather in the history of the church through the subsequent ages.

The Greek church still in possession of the subtlety and critical acumen of Athens and Alexandria discussed and formulated the teachings of Scripture and necessary thought on the person of God the Saviour. (Theology proper.) The Latin Church, with its Roman eye fixed on practical life and every-day needs, examined with legal mind and expressed in clear judicial terminology the doctrine concerning the sinner. (Anthropology.) Then arose the Germanic Church, which, confessing the Greek creed concerning the Saviour and the Latin creed concerning the sinner, was called to teach as never before the great truth of justification by faith—that cardinal doctrine by which sin and Saviour are exhibited in their proper relations to one another and to God.<sup>1</sup> (Soteriology.) Within these great outlines there can be traced a church growth in wisdom and in knowledge along all the courses of thought and activity. This development

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kliefoth. *Dogmengeschichte*.

however, is of truth from truth. It is a clearer apprehension of Scripture teaching in the light of more facts, a more logical treatment and a more historical setting forth of its contents. No step in such progress brings us into conflict with the positive results of the past. Paul's doctrine of sin can never become Hegel's idea of unripeness, nor the New Testament view of the death of Christ become the legitimate parent of the Schleiermacherian theory of the atonement. In other words, true development must include the fundamental facts and doctrines of primitive Christianity in all their sharp objectivity and can never be merged into what the new theology calls the growth of the idea. On the other hand, legitimate growth of dogma excludes all parasitic enlargements, or "corruption by excess." The grand defect in Newman's well-known essay on the development of Christian doctrine lies in regarding all movement as growth, and all that does not positively conflict with the idea as its lawful sequence.<sup>1</sup> We thus get the doctrine of perpetual revelation in the form of so-called development. Whatever views prevail in the church are true, and we are led by another path to the "survival of the fittest"—which may simply be the right of might. But to gain an approximate idea of the results reached through development by the new school whose disciples claim to be κατ' ἐξοχήν champions of historic theology, I give an outline of their teaching as set forth to-day in Germany and elsewhere. They teach, (1) a rationalistic view of the universe which subserves all under law, order and the impossibility of the miraculous.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mozley. "*Theory of Development.*" p. 31, ff.

<sup>2</sup> Schwartz. *Zur geschichte der neuesten theologie.* Vierte aufl., 1869, p. 586 f. Also, in general, Holsten, "*Die Prot. Kirche u, die theol. Wissenschaft,*" 1881.

(2) The Bible is *πάντα θεία καὶ ἀνθρώπινα πάντα*<sup>2</sup>—for us and our study a product of human mental activity.<sup>3</sup> With Luther, we must distinguish between the Bible and the Word of God—the latter is found in the former, but they are by no means coterminous. The Scriptures are the classical sources of our religious teaching, but differ in no respect in kind from the historic literature of any other period of church history. (e. g., I Maccabees, Jesus Sirach, and the extra-canonical New Testament literature are for historic purposes just as valuable as the so-called Bible itself.)<sup>4</sup> Christianity is not a revelation or gift of God any more than conscience or parental love. Jesus among men and the Bible among books are pure, natural products under the divine law of the universe and history.

(3) Inspiration is a creation of theologians.<sup>1</sup> The early church claimed no such special importance for the sacred writings, or held that the inspiration of Apostles differed only in degree from that of all Christians.<sup>2</sup> Since the Bible is just the best expression of the highest religious experience, it is only in a poetic way that it can be called inspired or a revelation. "To profit fully by the New Testament," says Matt. Arnold,<sup>3</sup> "the first thing to be done is to make it perfectly clear to one's self that its reporters both could err and did err."

(4) The *proprium* of the Protestant church is not an infallible theological system of doctrine, but solely a particular kind of inner religious life. The position

<sup>2</sup> A favorite phrase of Hamann.

<sup>3</sup> Die "*Eidbrüchigkeit*" unserer neukirchl. geistlichen. Kiel, 1881.

<sup>4</sup> Holtzmann S. 17.

<sup>1</sup> Holsten—Thesis 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cheyne-Sermon. "*The Christian point of view in the study of the Bible*," 1879, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> "*Literature and Dogma*," p. 131.

of Schleiermacher is adopted and religion made a feeling of dependence centered in the disposition (*Gemüth*). Dogma is ever changing, and mutability of theological views lies in the very nature of every religion. With increasing knowledge the creed must be constantly readjusted. And yet "our religious faith has remained the same as that of the Reformers though our scientific theological foundation for it has become essentially another."<sup>1</sup> History shows that theological dogma never was and never can be the ground of unity in the Protestant church. As it is the work of science to sift truth from imperfect historical statements, so it is the duty of scientific theology to find the kernel of truth in the old doctrinal forms of Christianity. This is the only path of progress towards perfection.

(5) The trinity is a theological figment—or at best a historic illustration of modes of religious manifestation.

(6) Jesus was not divine. His godhead sprang solely from the mistaken affection of his early followers. He is our Redeemer in the sense that he was the first and only revealer of the only true religious principle for mankind. He felt himself God's son only in holy communion with the Father and in this spiritualized sense he regarded himself as the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> He was not sinless. (Schenkel, Keim.)

(7) Men are justified by faith in the grace of God,<sup>3</sup> and not as the Jews thought by the works of the law. The sacrificial phraseology of Paul is but a theological coloring from the schools of the Pharisees and does

<sup>1</sup> *Eidbrüchigkeit*. S. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* S. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, S. 36 f.



not belong to the doctrine itself. Through grace God imputes a man's faith to him for righteousness. Paul sets this forth in the form of a sacrificial death of Christ—a form borrowed from Jewish customs, and which was simply a mode of teaching fitted to lead from the narrowness of Judaism to the Christian doctrine of grace, by means of figurative phraseology taken from the law. But the doctrine of justification by faith is quite independent of such a view. Paul emphasizes grace in such a way as to exclude any judicial notion.<sup>1</sup> The relation of God and man in justification is that of father and child—a relation which includes only love, trust and a sweet feeling of dependence. In fact, it is said<sup>2</sup> that no prominent German theologian, except Delitzsch and Ebrard, holds a vicarious substitution in the atonement.

(8) Religion and morality are not twain, as the old theology teaches, but one, as Kant teaches. Or as M. Arnold says<sup>3</sup> “Religion is morality touched by emotion.”

(9) The eschatology of the new theology is universalist and restorationist—though the whole question of immortality is usually relegated to the region of the *adiaphora*.<sup>4</sup>

The residuum of orthodoxy which cannot be explained by this semi-mythical method of objectionizing the subjective into history, may be found, we are told, in the accretions which have come to the primitive creed from heathen culture or the mistaken notions of theologians. The mechanical view of inspiration—a

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, S. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Matheson, *Aids to the study of German Theology*, 2d Ed., 1876, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *L. and D.*, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. G. Dreydorf. *Deutsch-Evang. Blätter*. März, 1882, p. 187.

thing unknown to the Jews in the Old Testament, and unclaimed by the New Testament for itself—is, it is said, borrowed from the later *Cabbala* and Greek heathenism.<sup>1</sup> We are told that the rival Christian and Platonic schools in Alexandria greatly influenced each other, and that as the philosopher must notice how neo-platonism was tinged by Christian teaching, so must the church historian admit that Christianity borrowed not a little from the latest academy. Theological subtleties on the nature of the Godhead became largely a substitute for decaying Platonism. The Abyssinian church, it is said, still grows metaphysical over seventy different theories of the union of the two natures in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The trinity is declared to be an echo of pre-christian thought, influenced afterwards by the philosophic trinity of the neo-platonists and not reaching its present form till A. D. 381 at the council of Constantinople. Such a dreadful doctrine as total depravity can be historically explained, it is held, from the gloomy remarks of Paul over his former wicked life, taken up by Augustine, a converted libertine, and framed into a church dogma as applicable to all men.<sup>3</sup> We are pointed, further, to the Greek church, which has stood still for a thousand years, and in its rejection of the *filioque* in the creed, its three-fold immersion at baptism, its administering confirmation and the Lord's supper to infants, the almost total absence of the idea of substitution in the work of Christ,<sup>4</sup> not to speak of its rejection of purgatory, invocation of saints and the

Cf. Holsten, S. 22. Philo made the *ó* inspired.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley, *Eastern Church*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Farley, *Unitarianism defined*, p. 156 f.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Stanley, p. 138.



papacy, perplexes not a little both Protestant and Romanist. The theology of the Reformation has grown, we are told,<sup>1</sup> from "the logical and legal elements in the West," "Forensic justification," "merit" and "demerit," "satisfaction," "imputed righteousness," "decrees;" federal headship, &c., are ideas almost unknown in the East, and are therefore a late growth in theology.

One point of paramount interest ever arises in this discussion about the historic, viz: the person of Christ and his miraculous life. Strauss and Baur, both disciples of Hegel, and consequently ready to sacrifice facts of history which conflict with the idea, found the so-called divine Christ nothing but the product of the thought of the early church. Martineau has sunk to the same plane, and says:<sup>2</sup> "From the person of Jesus everything *official* attached to him by evangelists and divines has fallen away: when they put such false robes upon Him they were, *i. e.* the evangelists were, but leading Him to death. The pomp of royal lineage and fulfilled prediction, the prerogatives of king, of priest, of judge, the advent with retinue of angels on the clouds of Heaven, are to us mere deforming investitures." The old rationalism against which Butler wrote his *Analogy* is now little heard of. The new rationalism adopts Butler's book and declares it perfectly true that man has by nature religious instincts.<sup>3</sup> The fulness of times of which Christian writers speak is accepted by these new theologians. The Jews looked for a Messiah. The classic religions were dying or dead. Philosophy had run its course.

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Losses in recent Theology*, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matheson, p. 140 f.

and humanity drifted doubting and confused over a troubled sea. It was just the time for something new and Christianity is just the natural product of such circumstances. The first century with its fantastic imaginings, the air full of astrology and magic and oriental mysteries was just the age when men put their reveries in the shape of fictitious history. "Christianity," we are taught,<sup>1</sup> "floated into the Roman empire on the wave of credulity that brought with it a long train of oriental superstitions and legends." We are pointed<sup>2</sup> to the pseudo lives of Pythagoras, Plotinus, Apollonius of Tyana, and the Clementines, and told that the gospel life of Christ is just the fantastic story of a noble teacher in whose person loving followers put historically that union of the divine and human after which every religious soul longs in spirit. Bruno Bauer declares that Christianity is just a historic setting forth of the disgust and despair of expiring antiquity, as Hegel taught that the kingdom of heaven in Christ was but a spiritualization of the Roman state in the Emperor—a pure soul teleology blossoming from the grave of a defunct political aim. F. Baur can tell how this picture grew into its present divine outlines between A. D. 50 and 150. The Petrine theology shows us the prophet of God; the Pauline adds the Greek idea of God revealing himself by communicating himself; then, in the middle of the second century, arose the Johannine doctrine betraying the influence of Philo, and which blended the views of perfect humanity and perfect godhead into the unity of his person. The new theology makes Jesus but a

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *Hist. of European Morals*, Vol. I, p. 397.

<sup>2</sup> Renan, *Vie de Jesus*.

lofty, though not sinless, illustration of true communion with God the universal Father. We thus find three representations of Jesus in modern theology. Strauss says in his latest work:<sup>1</sup> "The facts of his life are such that it is partly certain they did not happen, partly uncertain whether they did happen, and least of all beyond doubt that they did happen"—in other words he is a *myth*. The Tübingen critics make Jesus a product of the union of Petrine and Pauline theology—in other words an *idea*. The newest school strips off both myths and ideas, and makes him a teacher and guide to God—in other words a *mere man*.

"Why?" it is asked, "should we all agree to reject the fabulous and marvellous in the life of Simon Magus as given in the Clementine Homilies and early fathers, and yet accept the character of Christ with all the legends put upon it by the same fathers"? Now, it is plain that the only method of defence here must begin with historic investigation. The fulcrum on which Baur rested his critical lever was the Clementine writings, therefore, the first step in examining his theory must be a careful perusal of this apocryphal work. The character of Christ the *λόγος* is borrowed—it is asserted—from Philo. Then the man who will understand Christ must read Philo. Justin Martyr, who travelled from East to West, does not speak of Jesus as a Redeemer, but as *καινὸς νομοθέτης* simply—if so, we must study Justin the more carefully. The early heathen critics, Lucian and Porphyry, maintained against the first Christians that they made Jesus a god—a thing he himself never taught; if this be so, we must calmly and critically read what these men

<sup>1</sup> *Der alte und der neue Glaube.*

have written because *fas est et ab hoste doceri*. In a word, we are told from Hebrew, Greek and Latin that the character of the Lord we worship cannot stand the fierce light that beats upon it from history; then before we begin to reply we must read in Hebrew, Greek and Latin what history has to tell us as well as our adversaries on this cardinal article of our faith.

With regard to the miracles which form so essential an element in the character of Christ, the new school are equally confident. The great Schleiermacher admitted at least two miracles, the creation of man and the person of Christ; but our present day divines have outgrown their master, and declare miracles inadmissible—philosophically, religiously and historically. They are inadmissible philosophically because the modern almanac has no column for the miraculous; they are inadmissible religiously because Keim says:<sup>1</sup> “We are to make our faith in the crucified one independent of his miracles;” and history condemns them by showing (1) that they belong to all mythology; (2) that the first century was wonderfully predisposed towards the marvellous; (3) that Tacitus<sup>2</sup> and Suetonius<sup>3</sup> give a clear account of the Emperor Vespasian’s restoring a blind man to sight by spitting on his eyes, and healing the lame—yet who believes such stories?—and (4) that the miraculous in history forms a complete series.<sup>4</sup> The gospels narrate it of Christ; the Acts, of Peter and Paul; Irenaeus, of the saints; Origen, of the Church; St. Patrick, of himself; the mediæval chroniclers, of St. Bernhard; and all priests.

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichtl. Christus* S. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist.* IV. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Vesp.* 7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., “*The mythical element in the N. Test.*,” by F. H. Hedge, in “*Christianity and mod. thought*,” 1872, p. 166 f.



of Loyola, Xavier and every saint in the calendar. From the second and third century on the church is described, according to the law of history, as a sacred human growth under the guidance of the Spirit of God. "So," the new theology demands, "treat the first century. Make it purely historic and, stripping off both the mystic and the mythic, give us a sure scientific and historic standing ground on which to fight hostile science and antagonistic culture." Here history throws us into the toils of an inescapable Sorites. How much of this is true, and how much erroneous, can be answered only by careful and prayerful study of the past of man and the church.

### III.

But we must turn for a moment to the very practical question of the right method of studying history, and the benefits of such a method. We might here undertake to illustrate the three fundamental laws of Church History, viz.: that of objectivity, or a faithful statement of facts; that of the pragmatic principle, by which the logic of events is set forth; and, finally, the canon of theological investigation, which requires catholicity without indifference, faith without credulity, and religious sympathy without party prejudice. Instead, however, I desire, in closing, to urge the great necessity of a study of the sources of history. The system of teaching by text-books gives elementary information, very often quite comprehensive, but usually affords little stimulus to further research; and lectures, however carefully composed, cannot give the vivid touches, the direct impression, the indescribable sense

of nearness which comes from reading a work of the period studied, from putting one's ear to the mouth of the Past and hearing its varied accents in its own mother tongue. Here a teacher can do his very best work, if time and the requisite prequalification on the part of students can be obtained, in leading inquiring minds to dig for themselves among the roots of antiquity, and so, perhaps amid creative joy, help to historic blossom some important truth. To do this, our students should be able to read patristic Greek and Latin with some degree of ease.

As a matter of mental discipline, nothing can take the place of a classical education.

The University of Berlin, after a ten years' trial of the contrary, has just decided unanimously, on motion of a Professor of History, seconded by a Professor of Mathematics, that the only satisfactory preliminary training for students of all departments must include the Humanities. For the student of Church History, such a training is both indirectly and directly indispensable. The biography of the Church, since it left Jerusalem, has been written in Greek and Latin, and he who would really understand it, should hear the early witnesses in the tongue wherein they were born. Doctrinal discussions are almost inseparable from the language in which they arise. The questions of *ὁμοούσιον* or *ὁμοιούσιον*, *ἐξ ουκ ὄντων*, *θεοτόκος*, or Patristianism, the hypostatic in God or the trichotomic in man, etc., receive their full illustration only in the light of their original nomenclature.

I speak hesitatingly, but the American Church seems to me here to occupy a back place. To every Romish priest the Latin treasure house lies open. The



Greek priest can read history from Eusebius to Anna Commena in his own mother tongue. In Britain, scores of well-qualified students annually enter the church able to consult with ease the sources of history. The boys who leave Eton have read twice as much classics as our ordinary college graduates, and studied more of the Greek Testament than is overtaken in many of our seminary courses. A friend of mine—the senior classic at Cambridge in 1880—had read, by his twenty-second year, all the Greek and Latin in existence down to the age of brass. Theological students in Germany must pass their examinations in Latin, and having spent four hours a day, six days in the week, for eight or ten years, over the classics, are ready, at the invitation of Church History, to enter with zest upon a new field of ancient research. This German system of historic study aims at promoting original investigation. One great stimulus to such research is the private society held by the Professor, at which students, who wish to excel, study with him some source, and seek to discover about some person, place or thing, all that is possible to mortal man. *e.g.* The first year I was in Leipzig, Prof. Harnack took up Muratori's Fragment, examined the *fac simile* text, discussed the strange readings, conjectured to fill lacunæ, and investigated everything that could shed light on this important witness to the New Testament Canon. Another young Professor, a friend of mine, read, with his private class, Minucius Felix' beautiful apology, *Octavius*. I have spent an evening a week, winter after winter, in such a society with Prof. Delitzsch, Hebrew bible in hand, tracing critically historic growth in the sources of the Old Testament, with con-

stant reference to the radical assaults of the Reuss-Graf-Wellhausen school.

Thus to get a view of the whole range of thought some one peak is climbed with patient toil to the very summit, whence the student can see things in a light and relation he would scarcely have thought of by simply measuring with ecclesiastical theodolite from the valley below.

Such methods of study make the young minister continue historic research. A clergyman of my acquaintance, near Tübingen, has thus become an authority on the history of the Jews. Another, whom I met in Mühlberg, was making Clement of Alexandria a special study, expecting to write a book on the ethical system of that father. Thus, strange to say, some of the most learned works in Germany are written by country pastors; who, after the thorough start of the University, use their leisure to produce a book of permanent value. Such thoroughness in student life enables the reading minister to speak with authority in controversies which constantly draw their weapons from historic arsenals. Since the time of Niebuhr dogmatic ideas concerning history have gradually passed away, till now the other extreme seems in sight, and the past has sunk to the region of the probable. Holtzmann says<sup>1</sup> "History can no longer be believed as we believe in God, or known as we know logic, or constructed with certainty as we frame a mathematical system; but all real historic knowledge rests upon the modest art of ascertaining the highest degree of probability from more or less complete, but also more or less conflicting, material." If then, as

<sup>1</sup> P. 7.

these critics maintain, church history is even remotely subject to the uncertainty and need of sifting here described, it is clear that the matter will be still more fluctuating when studied through impressions of impressions—by means of secondary or tertiary authorities, and the only hope of approximating certainty will lie in a direct examination of the sources themselves.

Such a method alone promotes impartiality, for the calm objective study of the early church shows that almost every modern sect emphasizes some point of early doctrine or worship, while none can claim to be a perfect development of primitive Christianity. The true church historian, therefore, must sit with judicial calm above the water floods of party strife, tracing with unjaundiced eye the flow of facts and the deep currents of thought and feeling. He must belong to no church, save the Church of Christ. He must have a kind of honest recklessness such as perhaps no other student can have, for it is his duty to follow faithfully his narrative, listen carefully to the voices of the past, and record what his authorities give, regardless of his own preconceived notions or the hopes of any party or sect. The whole play of good and evil—the sphinx riddle multiplied a thousand fold—lies before him for observation and estimate. He needs knowledge and thought, facts and law, investigation and judgment. He must seek carefully to measure theory and practice, for Christianity is both doctrine and life. He must mount up and distinguish faith and reason, revelation and understanding; and in the broad catholicity of truth show how the church as God's gift to man is above all philosophy—offers the only guide to eternity, and yields the only true peace to the soul.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ullman, *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1829, Hft. iv.

Finally, such a study, and such a method of study, fill the mind with a vivid and growing sense of the living unity of the Church of God. The "unceasing purpose" of the Christian ages adds impulse to our prayers to-day. In the Epistle of Clement, the Presbeia of Athenagoras, the sermons of Chrysostom, the counsels of St. Bernhard, the theses of Luther, the treatises of Edwards, we catch the same tones and feel the same throbbings of a Christ-filled heart. Protestantism, far from being a product of the renaissance, or the necessary reaction of rationalism against superstition, is found to be in perfect unity and vital harmony with all battling for the truth, all preaching of the gospel, all resistance unto blood striving against sin. A long, unbroken line of faithful, educated pastors can be traced from our day to Pentecost; the Lord's supper—a living argument—has been proclaimed on the first day of every week from "that night on which he was betrayed" until the present; the thousand sacred associations of Sabbath and sanctuary are fragrant with the incense of the ages. The intelligent student of history feels the thrill and pulse-beat of such an unity. He has not merely the wisdom and experience of the church behind him, but he realizes its strength, its organic and absolute oneness as the mystical body of Christ pervading his soul-life, making him rich not merely as the heritor of the ages but as the concentration in himself of the power of the past, and impelling him by a blessed necessity to transmit with increased energy to the generations to come "that power that makes for righteousness."

The intelligent worker for God and his church must know the will and working of God—not merely as written in the Scriptures, but as told in the long story



of his providence and the grateful experience of his saints. An acquaintance with the past—showing what has been done and what left undone, what leads to success and what to failure, what has proved itself essential and what unimportant, whither certain tendencies lead and why apparent trifles must be resisted unto blood—is as important for the profitable church work of the future as the memory and experience of childhood and youth are indispensable to the best efforts of matured manhood. Every gospel must begin with a genealogy of Christ in history, showing what he is and has been to the church. Taking up the work where left by our predecessors, we can build wisely and well only in the knowledge of their lives and plan and hope. Here the historian and the preacher, the antiquarian and the evangelist, the student and the Christian meet—for here all wisdom and knowledge break into life and growth. Based on such historic teaching, Peter and Stephan and Paul and our Lord himself preached the gospel as a fruit of the fulness of time. From this historic bow have the sharpest arrows of the Lord been ever shot against the enemies of the King. In such a spirit and with such an aim I desire to teach the history of the kingdom of God on earth—so following the life of Christ as set forth in the experience and doctrines of holy men of old, that from every mission field, from every seat of controversy, from every place of prayer, from every home of thought, from every variety of worship there might be heard for our encouragement and growth the blessed gospel of the Son of God,—“unto Jews a stumbling block and unto Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”





# THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORIC RESEARCH

FOR THE

THEOLOGICAL STUDENT OF TO-DAY;

## An Address

BY

Rev. HUGH MACDONALD SCOTT, B. D.,

AT HIS INAUGURATION AS SWEETSER AND MICHIGAN PROFESSOR OF  
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

WITH

## THE CHARGE,

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